UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ General Assembly, considering need to end United States embargo against Cuba, calls on all States to refrain from passing laws impacting sovereignty of other States; resolution adopted by 101 votes in favour to two against, with 48 abstentions.

+ Multinational Force reports major progress in re-establishing democracy in Haiti, citing President Aristide's call for reconciliation; notes economic gains since lifting of sanctions.

+ President of France awards Secretary-General Grand Cross of French Legion of Honour in recognition of his achievements in fields of peace, development and international diplomacy.

+ Secretary-General congratulates Jordan and Israel on signing of peace treaty; hopes historic event will lead to fresh progress towards comprehensive Middle East peace.

+ United Nations prepares to observe Mozambique elections beginning tomorrow; WFP says shortage of food aid threatens resettlement of refugees there.

+ Establishment of international criminal court would reinforce respect for human rights and international peace and security, Legal Comittee is told.

+ Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information says DPI is pursuing joint ventures to inform more people more effectively about United Nations.

+ FAO coordinates $18.4 million agricultural rehabilitation programme to help Rwandan farmers plant food crops.

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The General Assembly today reiterated its call to all States to refrain from promulgating and applying laws and measures whose extraterritorial effects impacted the sovereignty of other States. It adopted a resolution to that effect by a vote of 101 in favour to two against (Israel and United States), with 48 abstentions, during its consideration of the necessity of

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ending the United States embargo against Cuba. The Assembly also urged States that applied such laws and measures to repeal or invalidate them as soon as possible.

Introducing the resolution, Cuba said that despite requests by the General Assembly and the international community, the United States Government had moved to strengthen the blockade against it. The blockade, which had cost Cuba $970 million last year, flagrantly violated the fundamental rights of the Cuban people and the country's independence, sovereignty and right to self-determination.

The United States representative, speaking in explanation of position, said his country sought to promote a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba through the careful application of sanctions directed at the Cuban regime. The United States had the sovereign right to determine its bilateral relationships, including its trading partners.

Many speakers said the United States embargo against Cuba violated basic tenets of the United Nations Charter, such as national sovereignty, and ran counter to principles of international law, including freedom of trade and navigation. They also called on the two countries to enter into a dialogue to resolve the matter.

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Substantial progress has been made in re-establishing democracy in Haiti, according to the latest report of the Multinational Force. It said the return of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the reconvening of the Haitian Parliament, and the President's call for reconciliation had brought the climate in the country closer to normal. Meanwhile, the lifting of economic sanctions and the resumption of commercial flights had benefitted the Haitian economy and general population. The report, covering the period 9 to 23 October, was transmitted to the Security Council by the Permanent Representative of the United States in a letter dated 24 October.

The report said Haiti had reached a level of security and stability that compared favourably to many other places in the world. The last two weeks had been relatively quiet, and Multinational Force contingents had been able to defuse tense situations on a number of occasions. As of 20 October, the Force had a strength of 16,750 troops, down from a high of 21,000. In addition, there were just over 600 police monitors from 11 countries in Haiti.

The Force Armée d'Haiti -- military and police -- had almost ceased to exist as an organization and posed no threat to the Multinational Force, the report continued. The police were ineffective and the military were in disarray. However, dissident elements, much like attachés, could still be a problem. The Government had agreed to review a proposal for the restructuring of a scaled-down army, while efforts were underway to improve police performance and professionalize the force.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali was today awarded France's highest honour, the Grand Cross of the French Legion of Honour, by President François Mitterand in recognition of his achievements in the fields of peace, development and international diplomacy. The Secretary-General and Mrs. Boutros-Ghali then attended a private luncheon given by President and Mrs. Mitterand at the Elysee Palace.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali had meetings this morning with the Secretary-General of the French Committee for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, Philippe Louet, and the President of United Nations Association of France, Mario Bettati. He was due to meet this afternoon with Special Representative Edouard Brunner to discuss preparations for his forthcoming visit to Georgia and to review the status of negotiations on a settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. A meeting with French Defense Minister Françcois Leotard was also scheduled.

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The Secretary-General today extended his congratulations to King Hussein of Jordan and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel on the signing of a peace treaty between their two countries. He regretted that he had been unable to attend the signing ceremony in person, but had sent a high-level delegation led by the Special Coordinatior in the occupied territories, Terje Roed Larsen.

He expressed hope that today's historic event would be followed by full implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles, and by new progress in the Israeli-Lebanese and Israeli-Syrian negotiations, leading to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

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National elections will begin in Mozambique tomorrow, and a total of 2,200 observers have been deployed around the country to monitor the voting, a United Nations spokesman said today. He noted that the official results were not expected to be released for three weeks, but expressed hope that Special Representative Aldo Ajello would soon be able to make a statement attesting to the freedom and fairness of the elections.

Meanwhile, the World Food Programme (WFP) said it faced a severe shortage of food aid for Mozambique. As a result, it warned, the resettlement of hundreds of thousands of refugees who had returned from neighbouring countries could be endangered.

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The establishment of an international criminal court would reinforce respect for human rights and international peace and security, the Sixth Comittee (Legal) heard yesterday as it continued its consideration of the International Law Commission's report. Germany, on behalf of the European

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Union, said work on setting up the court must proceed quickly, citing the spread of violence and hatred throughout the world and the systematic violation of fundamental rights.

Australia told the Committee that the establishment of ad hoc war crimes tribunals had demonstrated the pressing need for a permanent international criminal court. It must be given a clear place within the United Nations system to ensure its universality, authority and effectiveness. Austria said the court should be set up on the basis of an international convention. It should not have jurisdiction over national law but should fill the gap left open by domestic law enforcement.

The United States said there would be a compelling reason for setting up a permanent court when the Security Council decided that giving it jurisdiction in particular cases would promote peace and security. However, the need for a permanent mechanism was less clear in other situations. It was important to ensure that those guilty of crimes were effectively prosecuted and to decide whether a court would assist or impede national efforts.

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The Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information, Samir Sanbar, today said that the Department of Public Information (DPI) had built on and expanded its partnerships in order to inform more people more effectively about the United Nations. He said the Department was seeking a "multiplier impact" for its work through joint ventures with the media, intensified dialogue with academia, and stronger links with non-governmental organizations. He made those comments to the Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) as it began its consideration of questions relating to information.

Meanwhile, the DPI has announced that United Nations materials can now be obtained by almost 30 million users of electronic information around the world. Those materials are being made available through the Gopher -- a system allowing easy access to data on the Internet -- as well as through Agora, APC, Gemnet, Pegasus, Togethernet and other publicly accessible networks.

DPI electronic databases cover the whole spectrum of issues dealt with by the Organization. They carry the full texts of: statements and messages of the Secretary-General; DPI press releases; the Daily Highlights; the United Nations Journal; current Security Council resolutions; reports of the Secretary-General; archives of United Nations resolutions; basic documents; and materials relating to major conferences and peace-keeping operations.

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Rwandan farmers have begun planting food crops with the help of an agricultural rehabilitation programme coordinated by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Production of cereals and beans dropped 60 per cent last year as Rwandans fled the fighting in their country. The $18.4 million

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programme is providing farmers with the most basic agricultural inputs for the current planting season.

The FAO, in collaboration with the other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, has also established a network to distribute farm-inputs throughout Rwanda, where 850,000 farming families are in need of seeds, fertilizer and farm tools. It has received pledges and contributions of more than $7 million so far for its efforts in Rwanda, complemented by another $8 million pledged or contributed to other participants in the agricultural programme.

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